

Ukraine's Sanctions Against Firtash Were Widely Publicized – But His Response with Facts Contradicting Those Claims Went Ignored

By Lanny Davis

At some point in the near future, it appears Ukrainian President Zelensky will visit with U.S. President Biden. This is an extremely important visit since U.S.-Ukrainian close relations are now more important than ever. As one of the two attorneys in the U.S. representing Dmytro Firtash, I am writing on behalf of someone who has always stood for a strong and independent Ukraine, as he wrote in the *Kyiv Post* on May 21, 2104. See <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/dmytro-firtash-ukraine-must-be-strong-independent-and-neutral-348768.html>. I know that President Zelensky and President Biden share this vision of Ukraine.

I also know that both Presidents Biden and Zelensky appreciate the importance of allowing for due process of law based on facts before anyone is “convicted” of wrongdoing, whether that “conviction” happens by a government minister at a press conference or in the headlines.

U.S. satirist Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, famously once said: “A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes.” And that was said more than two centuries before the invention of the Internet, where lies can circulate the globe many times in less than a second, and search engines like Google keep them alive forever.

That is exactly what happened to Mr. Firtash last month. On June 18th, a minister from the Ukraine National Security and Defense Council made false statements at a press conference justifying sanctions that Mr. Firtash sold titanium products to “Russian military enterprises.” That statement was and is *100% and provably false*. No specifics or facts were offered to support these accusations because there are none. To the contrary.

Not surprisingly, these falsehoods went around the globe on the Internet almost instantly, leading to false headlines, such as:

- Reuters: “Ukraine sanctions tycoon Firtash for business links to Russian defence firms”
- Radio Free Europe: “Ukraine Hits Oligarch Firtash, Dozens Of Others With Sanctions”
- Atlantic Council: “Ukraine's Russia sanctions target Putin's inner circle”
- Mother Jones: “Rudy Giuliani's Ukrainian Friends Keep Getting Sanctioned”

Put aside the utterly false additional innuendo that Mr. Firtash is or ever was in “Putin's inner circle” or is or ever was a “friend” of Rudy Giuliani. (Mr. Firtash never met or talked to Mr. Giuliani and had nothing whatsoever to do with Giuliani and Trump's effort to dirty up President Joe Biden and his son, which President Zelensky also courageously refused to

take part in despite pressure from Trump). Here are the *indisputable facts* surrounding the false sanctions accusations, which we sent out throughout U.S. and European media to rebut the false charges by certain officials of the Ukrainian government:

- Mr. Firtash has *never* sold any titanium products, whether finished or raw materials, to any Russian “military enterprise.”
- *Ukraine’s own state-owned titanium raw materials mining company*, called United Mining Chemical Company (UMCC), is *currently* supplying titanium raw materials to the Russian company VSMPO-AVISMA, the world’s largest titanium producer. This was not disclosed by the Ukrainian security official at the June 18 press conference.
- Mr. Firtash’s other titanium businesses, such as his plant located in the Crimea, produce titanium dioxide, a white pigment in powder form that is used to dye paints, paper, and clothing, and has *no military application whatsoever*.

Surprise! Despite my efforts to circulate these facts to media throughout the U.S. and Europe, you will not easily find them published anywhere. *And to date, the Ukrainian government has not rebutted a single one of them.*

There are so many other instances of utterly false assertions about Mr. Firtash repeated in headlines and perceived as true as a result of their repetition. But a falsehood repeated 100,000 or one million times is not made true as a result of repetition. To offer three examples of endlessly repeated falsehoods in the media about Mr. Firtash: Mr. Firtash has never been charged by U.S. prosecutors with paying any bribe in India; he has never shared profits or done business with Russian organized crime figures or organizations; and has never – not once – been indicted much less convicted in Ukraine for corruption. Yet Google the words “corruption” and “Firtash” and you will see proof of Jonathan Swift’s expression about the speed of lies vs. the truth.

Maybe the Ukraine government can start by admitting they got their facts wrong on the Firtash sanctions and withdraw them. And then I hope the same government minister who held a press conference announcing the false accusations will hold another press conference and admit he got it wrong. Is that a hopeless hope?

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Lanny Davis serves as U.S. co-counsel to Mr. Firtash along with Dan Webb, former top U.S. prosecutor in Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Davis served as special counsel to President Bill Clinton (1996-1998) and as a member of President Bush’s Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board. He is co-founder of the Washington DC law firm, Davis Goldberg Galper PLLC.

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